

# **Libby Community Advisory Group**

## **Meeting Summary**

### **April 13, 2000**

#### **Introductions**

Gerald Mueller and Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) members present introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

#### **Agenda**

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting including the following topics:

- Subcommittee Letter;
- EPA Report on Funding for Screening of Workers Who Have Left Libby;
- CAG Member Questions for EPA; and
- Audience Questions and Comments.

#### **Subcommittee Letter**

Mayor Tony Berget presented the draft letter that had been mailed to CAG members with the March 23, 2000 meeting summary. After a discussion of the draft the CAG agreed to the following changes to the draft:

- Background material should be added so that agency and Congressional staff unfamiliar with this issue can understand it;
- Reference should be made to the need for testing both former W.R. Grace workers and their families;
- The \$250,000 figure should be clarified as Mr. Peronard's estimate of the costs for 200 people to travel to Libby; and
- The letter should be clarified to request money that would allow former W.R. Grace employees or their family members who have left the Libby area either to travel Libby for screening or to allow them to be screened near their present location.

The Mayor's subcommittee will redraft the letter and address three versions of it to ATSDR's Dr. Henry Faulk, and EPA's Bill Yellowtail and Tim Fields, respectively. The letters will be available at City Hall by Friday, April 21 for signature by CAG members. Copies of the letters will also be sent to Senators Max Baucus and Conrad Burns and Congressman Rick Hill.

#### **EPA Report**

##### Funding for Screening of Workers Who Have Left Libby

Paul Peronard reported that \$250,000 for former W.R. Grace workers and their families who have left the Libby area will likely be available by late August of this year. The money will fund either their travel to Libby or screening at clinics near where they are now living. EPA intends to include this funding as its top priority in its budget request for the second half of the current fiscal year to supplement on-going projects.

Mr. Peronard stated that the first two steps necessary to screen former W.R. Grace workers and their families who have left Libby is to obtain the list of all W.R. Grace employees dating back through the 1960's and then to locate them. He asked anyone knowing the addresses of former employees to provide it to EPA. A CAG member suggested that EPA run an advertisement in the local Elko, Nevada paper

where several former W.R. Grace workers now reside.

#### Denver Conference

Mr. Peronard also reported that EPA is convening a conference in Denver on April 24 - 27 to bring together representatives of thirteen federal agencies, including all ten EPA regions, and other scientists to consider what factors are important in assessing risk due to asbestos exposure as well as new analytical techniques (e.g. scanning electron microscopy and infrared microscopy) for assessing or measuring the factors. At present, EPA's official position is that, except for the 5 $\mu$  length, risk from asbestos is not a function of such factors as type of asbestos fiber (e.g. tremolite or chrysotile), ratio of fiber length to its diameter, etc. At the conference the invited agency and other scientists will present papers discussing factors important to determining disease risk. After a formal peer review of the papers presented at the conference, recommendations to EPA are expected in June. Mr. Peronard stated that he expects one of the outcomes of the April conference will be a call for additional research. Dr. Black and Mr. Anderson are be invited to participate in the conference as representatives of Libby.

### **CAG Member Questions for EPA**

EPA has not yet completed its written answers to CAG questions assigned to it. The answers will be ready for the next meeting in two weeks. The CAG agreed to take up questions for St. Johns Hospital, Lincoln County, and DEQ at the May 11 meeting, and the questions for W.R. Grace at the May 25 meeting. Representatives of these respective entities should be prepared to answer their questions at these meetings. The complete list of questions and the entity assigned to answer them is attached as Appendix 2.

### **Questions from CAG Members and Audience**

The following questions were addressed to Mr. Peronard or ATSDR during the subsequent CAG discussion:

- What is going on in the rest of the nation?  
*Answer* - EPA Region 10 has purchased gardening material at retail stores and checked for possible asbestos exposure in the ambient air from use of the materials. Only Zonolite products such as potting soil originating from the W.R. Grace Libby operations were found to present any risk of breathing asbestos. Also, EPA has identified 285 locations where products of WR Grace's Libby operations were shipped and about one third of those have been assessed to date.
- Will the new analytical techniques that may come out of the Denver conference allow ambient air samples stockpiled by Lincoln County to be assessed?  
*Answer* - Scanning electron microscopy might be one technique for assessing Lincoln County's stored filters and for estimating past levels of asbestosis in ambient air.
- Will Congressional hearings be held to review recommendations from the Denver conference?  
*Answer* - We don't know. Congress does not normally take an interest in scientific issues such as risk factors and analytical methods, but may do so in this case.
- Will funding be available for CAT scans of patients known to be in high risk categories if screening chest x-rays and pulmonary functions tests are negative?  
*Answer* - ATSDR does not now have funding for CAT scans. The screening testing protocol does not include CAT scans because they require higher doses of radiation. These tests are appropriate for the physician-patient relationship.
- What is the cause of the delay in the screening?  
*Answer* - The delay has two causes. First public review of the testing protocol caused delay. Also, construction of the screening building and ordering of the x-ray machines caused delay.

- What can be done about inaccurate press reports about the number of non-occupational asbestos disease cases?  
*Answer* - EPA is not sure what can be done except to not say anything. Hopefully, by next fall the screening by ATSDR will provide an accurate answer to the question of the number of asbestosis cases not related to occupational exposures.
- Who will pay for post-screening diagnosis and treatment of asbestos related disease? Neither the County indigent fund, nor St. John's Hospital has the money to do so.  
*Answer* - We don't know. W.R. Grace has announced that it will pay for treatment for people diagnosed with the disease, but an unfunded gap may remain between screening and diagnosis. The CAG may wish to revisit this question after reviewing the WR Grace treatment plan which was recently announced.
- Since asbestosis may still occur in people with no symptoms now, how can we assure that people will be called back at some reasonable interval for future tests?  
*Answer* - If people choose to have their medical records left with the St. Johns Clinic, regular call backs can occur. However, each person will have the right to designate to whom the medical records will be sent. If the records are sent to other doctors, then it will be those doctors and/or the patients responsibility to arrange for future tests.
- Have clean-up plans been finalized for the two "hot spots"?  
*Answer* - No. Arrangements for taking asbestos contaminated soils back to the mine are under discussion but have not been finalized.
- Will local people be trained and certified by EPA to cleanup asbestos contamination in the Libby area?  
*Answer* - Training leading to EPA certification for handling asbestos in homes will be provided in June.
- What is the status of ambient air and soils testing in homes and businesses?  
*Answer* - Another round of testing has been completed. The next step is conduct exposure assessments.

## Next Steps

The next meeting is scheduled from 7 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, April 27 in the **City Council Chambers**. The agenda will include review of EPA's written responses to CAG member questions. EPA agreed to mail with this meeting summary a copy of the W.R. Grace treatment plan. This plan will be reviewed by the CAG at its May 25 meeting, when Alan Stringer, spokesperson for W.R. Grace can next attend.

# Appendix 1

## CAG Member Attendance List

### April 13, 2000

Name	Group/Organization Represented
Jon Constan	Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Wendy Thomi	EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
Brad Black	Lincoln County Health Officer
Bob Tunis	Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation
Graysen Casey	Kootenai Homes & Land
Betty Jo Beagle	Montana Covering Kids (Alternate for Carol Ray)
Lloyd Douglas Williamson	Libby Tax Payer
Glen Tucker	ATSDR
Norita Skramstad	Asbestos Victims
Kerry Beasley	St. Johns Lutheran Hospital
Ron Anderson	Lincoln County Environmental Health
Don Wilkins	Lumber & Sawmill Workers
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO
Leroy Thom	Former Grace union employee and local businessman
K.W. Maki	Libby Schools Commissioner John KonzenLincoln County
Wilbur Wilson	Lincoln County Council on Aging
Mayor Tony Berget	City of Libby
Commissioner John Konzen	Lincoln County
Commissioner Rita Windom	Lincoln County
David F. Latham	The Montanian
Paul Peronard	EPA On Scene Coordinator
Jeff Lybarger	ATSDR Atlanta
Mike Switzer	Asbestos Victim

## Appendix 2

### CAG Member Questions

#### **Questions for EPA**

20. Was testing for asbestos was possible 10 years ago? 20 years ago?
21. Has EPA tested homes for asbestos anywhere else?
6. I live in Troy, my attic is full of Zonolite. Why can't I be tested?
7. I did not live here as a resident until a few years ago. However, my family and I visited every summer. I understand that the screenings will be done only on long term Libby residents. What about my family?
8. I live in Troy, will I be able to be screened?
10. Will EPA contract local businesses and labor to work on mitigation work?
13. When we get a clean bill of health, whenever that is, who will help Libby get that "good new" up in all the regional, national and international press?
14. I'm not sure what this stuff looks like, how about some photos so I can tell what I'm looking for in my home and work place.
15. What does the EPA recommend a homeowner do that has vermiculite insulation in their home?
16. Homes with vermiculite insulation, do they present a health risk?
17. Are they testing, or have tested, homes of former employees of W.R.? Where asbestos could have been brought home and stayed in the carpets, etc.?
19. Will the EPA have pamphlets warning homeowners and buyers of the possible hazard of living in a home with vermiculite insulation?
20. If I have it in my yard or house, should I be tested? My siblings? My relatives?
21. I have read in the paper where Grace will not have access to medical records.
  - v. How are they going to pay the medical bills? Insurance - new account? How?
  - w. If they are not going to have access to medical records, can we distribute the agreement between WR Grace and St. Johns and the medical community so that we can assure the victims or potential victims that doctor/patient confidentiality will not be compromised?
  - x. Why is there not a written agreement? If there are strings, why were they accepted?
23. Is the EPA looking at adjusting the health hazard criteria for fibers less than 5 microns in length due to the toxicity of the type of asbestos we are dealing with?
27. Who is watching the hill?

28. How will the EPA notify and make the arrangements for former workers and/or family members of former workers to come to Libby and be tested?
29. Are the results of the first screening going to be released to the public and if so will it be done in a timely manner?
30. Who will be accepting responsibility for educating the public in asbestos and its danger, County or Hospital?
31. There is concern that Zonolite insulation contains tremolite that may be hazardous to your health. Is this true and if so, why can't the situation be corrected while the expertise is still here? Vs. organizing a management program on older houses being remodeled that contain Zonolite insulation. If the owners have to foot the bill, how costly is this going to be getting the proper contractors to take it out?
32. Has there been any kind of scoring to determine whether it gets on NPL list?
33. If not, under what authority is EPA investigating and taking action?
35. What if Grace goes bankrupt?
36. What products containing asbestos are out there?
37. What are other EPA regions doing?
38. Where do we get funding from if not from Grace?
39. What is EPA doing in the two homes in which asbestos was found?
42. Who should I call with questions?
43. To whom should we refer people who have consumer products questions?
45. Is there a way to determine the toxicness of "short, fat fibers", perhaps through analysis of victims?

#### **Questions for W.R. Grace**

4. If Grace is now trying to remedy what they have done to the community and it's people, why are their spokespersons quoted in the papers referring to Libby residents as "greedy" and that is only "special interest groups" that are pushing the issue?
5. Will Grace only compensate people who are ill, or will they do anything for the town - which will suffer from a declining population, loss of home sales, etc. due to the health hazards in Libby in land, air, and homes?
9. My home is the major financial investment I have. If I sell so I can accept employment elsewhere and property values are low because of what Grace has done to the community, will Grace compensate me for the difference between the final sale price and the appraised value? What about losses I take on improvements that I have done to the home?
12. Will any senior Grace executive officials ever stand trial and do time for what they have done?
21. I have read in the paper where Grace will not have access to medical records.
  - x. How are they going to pay the medical bills? Insurance - new account? How?
  - y. If they are not going to have access to medical records, can we distribute the agreement between WR Grace and St. Johns and the medical community so that we can assure the victims or potential victims that doctor/patient confidentiality will not be compromised?

- z. Why is there not a written agreement? If there are strings, why were they accepted?
26. Does Grace's medical payments include prescription drugs, oxygen and tanks, hospice, home health, travel and lodging for the people who get this disease?

### **Questions for ATSDR**

18. The deaths, that are blamed on asbestos, have actual autopsies been performed to determine cause of death?
21. I have read in the paper where Grace will not have access to medical records.
- aa. How are they going to pay the medical bills? Insurance - new account?  
How?
- bb. If they are not going to have access to medical records, can we distribute the agreement between WR Grace and St. Johns and the medical community so that we can assure the victims or potential victims that doctor/patient confidentiality will not be compromised?
- cc. Why is there not a written agreement? If there are strings, why were they accepted?
22. If smoking tobacco increases the odds of getting asbestosis, how about wood smoke or slash burning?
29. Are the results of the first screening going to be released to the public and if so will it be done in a timely manner?
30. Who will be accepting responsibility for educating the public in asbestos and its danger, County or Hospital?
40. How many people with no connection to the mine have been diagnosed with asbestosis?

### **Questions for St. Johns Hospital**

3. People in the community do not trust St. Johns Hospital because they think they were in league with Grace years ago when the X-Rays were falsified. I have heard people say they will not go to St. Johns for testing or treatment. Grace has contributed money to St. Johns in the past. Who will actually "run" the testing and treatment process?
25. How did St. Johns come to the decision to accept the money? What criterion was used to help make the decision?
44. Is it correct that x-rays can't distinguish between "long, thin fibers" and "short, fat fibers"?

### **Questions for Lincoln County**

11. I have read in the brief presented to the Senate Committee by the Lincoln County Department of Environmental Health that Mr. Ronald Anderson believes his organization should expand its role in education about asbestos related topics. However, they told us through the newspaper that the levels in town were not a danger, less than one percent. Then the EPA came to town and it is different now. Will they get this job?

### **Questions for the Media**

24. Why is the press in Libby down playing just about every EPA announcement and the rest of the state papers are hearing a different story?

### **Questions for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality**

34. How can Libby get tobacco settlement money?

35. What if Grace goes bankrupt?

38. Where do we get funding from if not from Grace?

**Unknown**

41. Will anyone write a consolidated history of the Libby asbestos experience?